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The Heavenly TREASURE
in Earthen VESSELS.

S E R M O N

Preach'd at the FUNERAL of

The Late REVEREND

Mr. *THOMAS FREKE,*

Minister of the Gospel,

In *Bartholomew-Close, LONDON,*

September the 14th. 1716.

By *W. T O N G.* *A*

L O N D O N,

Printed for JOHN CLARK, at the Bible and
Crown in the Poultry. 1716.

Price Six-Pence.

The Heavenly Treasure
in Eastern Vessels.

W. Augrave.

SERMON

Preached at the Funeral of

John Augrave

MR. THOMAS TRIMME



Minister of the Gospel.

at St. Andrew's Church, London,

on the 14th. 1716.

By W. T. O. V. G.

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A FUNERAL
SERMON
FOR
Mr. THOMAS FREKE.

2 CORINTH. IV. vii.

*But we have this Treasure
 in earthen Vessels, that the
 Excellency of the Power
 may be of GOD, and not of
 us.*



A**FTER** reading these
 Words, and viewing the
 sad Occasion upon which
 they are now mentioned,
 One would be ready, in
 Imitation of the greatest
 Example, to sit down and shut the Book,

and refer it to your selves, whether this Day this Scripture be not fulfilled in your Sight.

WE have now once a Week for three Weeks successively followed our dear Brethren the faithful Ministers of CHRIST to the silent Grave, thus Death is working in us, and loudly telling you, That how great soever the Treasure is which you have in a Gospel Ministry, it is deposited in Earthen Vessels, that are frequently and sometimes very suddenly, broken in pieces.

IF while Death thus works in us, the Immortal Seed and principle of a Divine Life be manifestly working both in us and in you, this will be a sufficient Reason why we should not faint, for tho' our Outward Man perish, our Inward Man will be renewed Day by Day.

By the Treasure mentioned in the Text, I take it for granted you will all understand the Everlasting Gospel in the Doctrines, Promises, Rules, Ordinances, and Privileges thereof, these are a great and rich Treasure, more are they to be desired

desired then Gold, yea than much fine Gold.

BUT then it must be remember'd, that in the Context, the Gospel which is justly called a Treasure is here described,

1. As dispensed by the Ministers of CHRIST, and by the Expressions used here, it is not so much the Gospel abstractly considered, as the Dispensation or Ministration of the Gospel, that is the Treasure. It is true the Gospel it self is a Treasure, but it cannot be said of those that want the Ministration of the Gospel that *they have* this Treasure, to the rest of the World it is a Treasure hid, a Spring shut up, a Fountain sealed. And

2. As received by Faith; for it is not the bare Letter of the Gospel, that is so great a Treasure, but the Spirit of it, when the Light of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST shines into our Hearts, then, and not till then it proves an enriching Treasure to us. The Ministration of the Gospel itself, as well as that of the Law,
may

may be only a Ministration of the Letter,
 and not of the Spirit, and where it is so
 2 Cor. iii. 6. it killeth instead of giving Life.

THE Gospel may be preached to a
 People, and yet even then hid from them,
 2 Cor. iii. 4. and so they may be lost for want of the
 true inward Light and Life of it.

To those that are blind, the Light
 shines in vain, tho' they are surrounded
 by its brightest and strongest Rayes,
 they are still in the dark, and it is so with
 respect to the Light of the Gospel there
 must be spiritual Sight as well as Light,
 or else *the Light doth but shine in Darknes;*
and the Darknes comprehendeth it not.

THERE is a Vail upon the Heart of
 fallen Man, a Vail of Pride and carnal
 Prejudice, which shuts out the clear and
 full Evidence of Gospel-Truth, and suf-
 fers not the Sinner to submit unto it,
 and where this Vail is not taken away
 by the Spirit of the LORD, it still en-
 creases, and grows up to a sort of Fas-
 cination through the Power and Subti-
 lity of the God of this World, who
 adds a super-induced Blindness unto the
 Minds

Minds of those that believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST who is the Image of GOD should shine in unto them.

THESE usefull and mysterious Truths, are largely treated on in the Beginning of this Chapter and the End of that foregoing, and they well deserve a frequent Perusal and our closest Consideration.

IT is the GOSPEL thus circumstantiated, as dispensed by the Ministers of CHRIST, and received in Faith and Love, that is the Treasure which the Apostle speaks of. *But this Treasure we have in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us.* Where we observe,

I. THE Nature and Value of the Gospel. It is a *Treasure*: They that have the Gospel have a *Treasure*.

II. THE Way and Means by which GOD conveyes this *Treasure* to Men. It is by *Earthen Vessels*.

III. THE

III. THE Reason why God commits such a *Treasure* to *earthen Vessels*, and Conveys it to us by them, *That the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of Us.*

AND while I am speaking to you of these Things, let your Eye affect your Hearts, look upon the poor broken Vessel that stands here before you, it was indeed a little, weak Vessel, but a chosen Vessel, and One that contain'd a very Rich Treasure. That Precious Soul that has now left you, a rich and noble Mind, and that Precious Gospel which has not left you and I hope never will: For *tho' all flesh be Grass. And all the Glory of Man as the Flower of Grass: And the Grass withereth and the flower thereof fadeth away, yet the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.* That is the Word which by the Gospel is preached to you.

I SHALL enter no further into Mr. Freke's Character, he was well known to us all, and I can truly say from my first

Acquaintance with him, which was some Years before my Lot was cast in this City, I never heard any one give him an ill Character : He had a good Report of all Men and of the Truth itself, *and we also bear witness, and ye know that our witness is true.*

WHEN this Distemper seized him some Years ago, which has now returned and suddenly taken him away from us, I was almost a daily Witness of that exemplary Faith and Patience, and Comfort, and Resignation to GOD which he then exprest, and I doubt not but when his Great LORD came, and call'd him away, tho' he might not immediately expect so great a Change, he was not unprepared for it ; and it was observed by those about him, that for the little Time he had the Use of his Reason, he continually lifted up his Eyes to Heaven with all the Signs both of a serious and well satisfied Mind,

I RETURN to the Text where we are to consider,

I. THE Nature and Value of the Gospel ; It is a *Treasure*. I need not tell you, it is not a Treasure of a Worldly but of a Spiritual Nature, it is not given us to enrich the Body or enlarge the Estate, but it is given for better Purpose to enlarge and enrich the Soul.

I. IN the Gospel there is a *Treasure* of excellent Truths to enrich the Mind with Knowledge and true Wisdom, and these are the Riches of the Mind ; an ignorant and a foolish Mind, is a poor and worthless Mind, and yet this is the State of all by Nature, the Soul of Man hath lost the Knowledge of God, and of itself, and of the Difference between Truth and Error, Good and Evil, and therefore thinks, and speaks, and acts very foolishly.

MANY Attempts have been made to repair this Loss, and to recover true Wisdom, but all in vain ; and no wonder that they were in vain, since they were made by Men that had themselves lost
true

true Wisdom, and did not so much as know what it was, or where to be found.

THE Philosophers of Greece and Rome, the pretended Masters of Reason, could not recover true Wisdom to themselves, or others: So far from that they became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Hearts were darkned, and professing themselves Wise they became Fools; they not knowing how much the Reason of Men is now perverted by corrupt Affections, set up this depraved Power for a competent Judge in all Matters Divine as well as Humane, and so were misled by it into a Thousand Errors and Follies, and thus Matters went on, till *after that*, 1 Cor. i. *in the Wisdom of GOD, the World by Wisdom* ^{21.} *knew not GOD, it pleased GOD by the Foolishness of Preaching to save those that believe.*

A FEW poor Unlearned Men being inspir'd of GOD, made such Discoveries of the Nature, and of the Mind, and Will of GOD to the World, as never was done, nor ever could have been done by all the Professors of Science, falsely so called.

THESE Discoveries of the Great God as manifested in the Flesh, are included in the Holy Scriptures, and especially in those of the *New Testament*, and they make a very rich and invaluable Treasure of Truth and Knowledge; such as is most proper to direct the Practice, and secure the chief and the eternal Interests of Men.

AND that Mind that hath received these great Truths in the Love of them, is enrich'd by them, and made wise to

2 Tim.iii.
15.

2. IN the Gospel there is a *Treasure* of holy and righteous Principles and Habits to enrich the Heart. By the Heart of Man, I mean the Soul considered as the Seat and Subject of Virtue and Vice.

ORIGINAL Righteousness was the rich Furniture of the Heart of Man in his first State; this was the Complex of all true Virtue. Such as the Fear and Love of GOD, Love to our fellow Creatures, Justice, Fidelity, Gratitude, Integrity, Purity and Chastity of Soul and
the

the like : These are lost out of the Soul, the first sinfull act extinguished at once every holy and righteous Disposition, and introduced Habits of a contrary Nature, Enmity to God, Injustice, Pride, Falsehood, Ingratitude and all Sorts of Impurity. Some little Shew and faint Resemblance of Virtue there may be found in the Nature of Man, but the Thing itself is gone. And by this Means the Soul is become even more wretchedly poor, than it was by the Loss of true Wisdom.

How sorry, how miserable a Thing is an immortal Soul destitute of Love to God and Man, destitute of all Sincerity, Purity, and Justice, and under the Power of the contrary vicious Habits? How much better were it, to have the Spirit of a Beast that goes downward, than to have the noble Faculties of a humane Soul forsaken of the right governing Principle, and wholly depraved and corrupted by a predominant Viciosity?

AND yet thus and no better it was with all Men, till the Gospel came in
Power ;

Power; for the Schools of Morality, and the Laws of Princes could no more make Men truly Vertuous, than those of Science, could make them truly Wise.

WHERE-EVER the Gospel is received into the Heart, it is there an incorruptible Seed of all holy Principles, and effectually teaches Men to deny Ungodliness and all Wordly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present World.

WHEN the exceeding Great and precious Promises of the Gospel are thoroughly believed we are made Partakers of the Divine Nature, which contains in it all the Graces of the Spirit, and enables us

² Pet. i. 5. *to add to our Faith, Virtue; and to Virtue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly-kindness; and to Brotherly-kindness, Charity: And if these Things be in us and abound, We have better Riches than the Treasures of Egypt, or of both the Indies.*

6. 7.

3. IN the Gospel there is a Treasure of

of Righteousness and Peace to enrich the Conscience. The Conscience is the Soul as judging of its State and Actions, according to the Rule of the Word of God. A good Conscience is a great Treasure, Prov. 4. he that has it is satisfied from himself. ^{14.}

No Man on Earth can have a good Conscience but by believing the Gospel, Faith leads to the Blood of CHRIST by which alone the Conscience is cleansed from dead Works; the Blood of CHRIST shed upon the Cross is the atoning Sacrifice by which the Justice of GOD is satisfy'd. And when this is applied to the Soul by Faith, and discern'd by a Man's own Conscience, it produceth holy Peace and Joy. For Conscience having arrested the Soul of a Sinner in GOD's Name, can accept of no Bail but what GOD Himself accepts. But if GOD be satisfied, and this be known to us, then Conscience is satisfied, and from Condemning proceeds to Quiet and Comfort the Soul. And they that have this for their Rejoycing, possess a Kingdom, even that Kingdom of GOD that consists not in Meat and Drink,

Rom. xiv. Drink, but in Righteousness Peace and
17. Joy in the Holy Ghost.

1 Pet. i.
4. 5.

4. AND *lastly*. In the Gospel there is a *Treasure* of gracious Promises, which enrich the whole Man, Promises of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come. Here is the grand Charter of the City of GOD, by which all the true Members thereof, are Enfranchized with Rich and great Privileges ; all Things are theirs, the Plenty of GOD's House, the Fullness of CHRIST, and his unsearchable Riches, And *an Inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, and that fadeth not away ; reserved for them in Heaven, who are kept by the mighty Power of God thro' Faith unto Salvation*. In a Word, The Gospel is the Field where the Treasure is hid, it is here we have the Pearl of great Price for which a Man may afford to part with all he has in this World, and be a great Gainer.

AND tho' to those to whom our Gospel is hid, these Spiritual Riches and Treasures appear but Fancies, and
Dreams ;

Dreams ; yet the Day is coming when the great and rich Men of the World, would be glad with all their Hearts to exchange all their Worldly-Wealth for the Treasures of Grace and a good Conscience ; when the midnight Cry is heard, and they are called to go out and meet their great LORD. Then if they could buy this Oyl at any Rate, they would be glad to have it ; But, *it cannot be procured for Job Gold ; neither shall Silver be weighed for the xxviii. 15, 16. Price thereof, no mention shall be made of Coral or Pearls, for the Price thereof is above Rubies.* We proceed,

II. To consider the Way by which GOD conveys this enriching Treasure to Men : And that is by *earthen Vessels*. *We have this Treasure in earthen Vessels.*

By these *earthen Vessels*, he doubtless means the Ministers of the Gospel, such as He was, a frail, dying Man ; and tho' this Character more directly belongs to their Bodies ; yet it may be applied to their Persons while they are in this World. They are but *earthen Vessels*.

2 Cor.
viii. 23.

THIS is a humbling Character ; they have Titles given them in the Scripture of another Nature ; they are called, *the Stewards of the Mysteries of God, the Stars in Christ's Hand ; The Angels of the Church, and the Glory of Christ* : But that by all this Honour they may not be exalted above measure, they are here put in Mind, that no Character more truly belongs to them, than this of *earthen Vessels* : And this leads us to consider them, both as to their *Matter* and *Form*.

(I.) THEIR *Matter* : They are *Earthen*, like the Oyfer-shell in which the Pearl is found ; or like the Potter's Clay, of which the *Vessel* is made.

I. THEY are Men and not Angels ; Men by Nature, tho' Angels by Office ; the Sons of *Adam* whose Body was formed out of the Earth ; in such mean *Vessels* is Gal. iii. this great *Treasure* deposited. *The Law was*
 Heb. ii. 2. *ordained by Angels. That Word was spoken by Angels.* But the Gospel was committed to Men : And GOD has dealt kindly

ly with us in this Matter : For by the Terrors that the People were in at the giving of the Law, it is evident, the Inhabitants of this World cannot bear the Ministration of Angels, it would confound rather then convince and instruct us. G O D teaches you by those that are of yourselves, who have the same Concernment in the Word that you have ; and therefore deal for your Souls as they do for their own, handing out to you the same Truths that their own Souls Feed, and live upon.

As in C H R I S T, you have a *compassionate High-Priest, who is touched with the Feeling of your Infirmities, having been in all Points tempted as you are, yet without Sin* : So in Gospel-Ministers, you have compassionate Helpers of your Faith, being subject to the same Trials and Weaknesses, as you are ; not excepting even those that are sinful : They are not ignorant of Satan's Devices, nor insensible of the Body of that Death that hangs about them. *Ye know after what* Acts 24.
Manner I have been with you at all Times, 19.

*serv'ing the Lord with all Humility of Mind,
and with many Tears and Temptations, &c.*

2. THEY are dying Men; not sent from the Dead, Men that live a dying Life, and *can pretest, by the Rejoycing they have in CHRIST JESUS, that they die daily.* They know, that they must shortly put off this earthly Tabernacle; and these Thoughts quicken them to Diligence in their Duty. Our own Thoughts may sometimes suggest to us, That one Minister sent from the Dead, would convert more Souls, than all the Ministers living: But it is a vain Thought, as our SAVIOUR has taught us in the Parable of the rich Glutton, who desired, that *Lazarus* might be sent back into the World, to warn his Brethren, that they should not come into that Place of Torment. But was told, *If they would not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though One rose from the Dead.*

Luke xvi.
31.

WHEN Paul had been caught up into the third Heaven, and returned into
the

the World again, instead of giving us a distinct Account of the wonderful Things he heard and saw there, as One might have expected; he was able to say no more, but that he *heard unspeakable Words, and Things that it was not lawful for him to attempt to utter*; because he was not able to do it in any Measure suitable to the Nature of them. We have no Words to express, no Capacities to receive such Things, as they really are, but have only imperfect Hints, and as we can take them by Line upon Line, from Men like our selves that have their own Death in their Eye, and have nothing so much at Heart, as *that they may finish their Course with Joy, and the Ministry they have received of the Lord JESUS to testify the Gospel of the Grace of GOD.*

(2.) As to their *Form*; They are *Vessels*, which the Great Potter hath fashioned and fitted for this Use. GOD hath formed them for the preserving and conveying this *Treasure*, this He hath done by giving them their Ministerial Qualifications,

cations, Gifts, and Graces. And then he hath sealed them for his Use by Ministerial Ordination, thus they become select *Vessels*. When *Ananias* was sent to *Paul*, A&S ix. he was told, That *Paul* was a chosen *Vessel* 75. to bear the Name of CHRIST among the Gentiles and Kings, and the Children of Israel.

FROM this Form into which they are cast, we learn,

I. THAT they can convey Nothing but what they have first received: They are not the *Fountain*, they are but *Cisterns*; they have not there Springs of Light, and Grace, and Peace, in themselves, these are all in CHRIST; whatever is really valuable and proper to enrich the Soul of Man, is from CHRIST, and Ministers are only the Means of Conveyance; and if they take upon them to dispense their own Fancies and private Opinions instead of the pure Gospel of Christ, they break in upon their Character, and betray the Trust that is reposed in them.

AND

AND indeed it appears by this, how necessary it is, that the Vessels of the House of God should not only be cleansed from Sin, that they may hold the Mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience, but that they should be empty'd of Self; for Self-sufficiency and Self-conceitedness will render them incapable of Receiving and Conveying the Treasure of the Gospel: You can convey Nothing by a Vessel that is fill'd already with Something of another Nature.

2. WHAT they receive, they receive it not for themselves only, but for others; the Design of such Vessels, is not only to keep, but to convey what is put into 'em. Ministers, above all Men, ought to remember they are not their own, nor are any of their Endowments given them merely for their own Use. They do not only belong to CHRIST, but to the Church. *Paul, Apollos, Cephas, all are yours.*

THE *Learning* and *Gifts* of Ministers, are not their own, nor to be used
for

for Ostentation and Self-interest, but for
 Eph. iv. the Edification of the Souls of Men.

12.

THE Graces of Ministers, are not
 only for themselves, but for the Good
 2 Cor. vi. of others, *Their Pureness, Long-suffering,*
 6. *Kindness and Love unfeigned,* are for the
 Service of precious Souls.

THEIR Comforts, which they at
 any Time receive, are not given them
 only to keep up their own Hearts from
 2 Cor. i. sinking; but GOD comforteth them in
 4. *all their Tribulations, that they may be able to*
comfort them that are in any Trouble, by the
Comfort wherewith themselves are comforted
of God.

AND having thus received all for the
 Use and Benefit of others, they are
 obliged to be free and faithful in com-
 municating all to others; it would be Sa-
 crilege in them if they should keep back
 any Thing. It was the Rejoycing of the
 Apostle Paul, that he had kept back No-
 thing that was profitable to the People.
 Acts xx. He had not shunned to declare unto them all
 20. the Counsel of God; and therefore, was
 Ver. 26, pure from the Blood of all Men.
 27.

N O T

NOT to do thus, is to hide their Talents in a Napkin, which in Ministers especially, will turn but to a very bad Account in the Day of the Lord JESUS.

THERE is a true and sober Sense in which it may be said of Ministers, That their very Souls are not their own : And it was no Compliment, but a lively Image of the very Heart of the Apostle, when he told the *Thessalonians*, *Being desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of God only, but our own Souls ; because ye were dear to us.* We are now come

¹ Eph. ii.
⁸.

III. To enquire, Why GOD hath made this Disposition of the Matter, committing so great a Treasure into such mean, and frail Vessels ? And this He hath done, *That the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us.*

THERE is an Excellency of Power attending the Ministration of the Gospel, a Power almost incredible, ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς δυνάμεως.

THIS Power partly appears in preserving

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ving the rich *Treasure* of the Gospel pure and entire while it is deposited in such Poor *earthen Vessels*, that tho' the Ministers die, *the Word of the LORD endures for ever*; here must be a powerful Superintendancy of the Great GOD over the Gospel, and the several Doctrines of Faith contained therein, that these abide still the same, tho' they pass through so many Hands, when the private Opinions of many Learned Men, how strenuously soever defended and industriously propagated, are dead and forgotten with the Authors of them.

THIS Power is also seen in supporting these frail *Vessels* under all the Weight of that *Treasure* they sustain; this seems to be the more direct intention of the Apostle, as we may gather from the Words following the Text, *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed*. It is an Instance of the great Power of GOD, that he bears up his Ministers under all that Weight of Labours, Cares, Fears, Infirmities,

mities, Reproaches and Temptations that they have to struggle with. This was especially seen in the Supports which the *Apostles* received from GOD, for their Trials were extraordinary, and so were their Comforts too; an account you have of them in 2 Cor. xi. 23. and foll. Where after a large detail of particular Trials, and very great ones; he adds, *ver. 28. Besides those Things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the Care of all the Churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?* Now under all this Load the Apostle was supported, and even gloried therein, because it appeared hereby, that the Power of CHRIST rested upon him; and when he was weak in himself, then he was strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might.

BUT that Instance of Divine Power that I shall most insist upon, is that which appears in making the Administration of the Gospel by these *earthen Vessels* effectual, to the enriching of the Souls of Men with the *Treasures* of Wisdom and Holiness.

GOD

GOD has convey'd this *Treasure* to Men in *earthen Vessels*, that where the Gospel is successful, it may appear to all, and be acknowledged by all, the Efficacious Power, is of GOD; not of Men, not of Ministers, but of GOD himself. Now here I would Observe,

(1.) THAT it is a Design worthy of GOD to secure to Himself the Glory of a successful Gospel. And

(2.) THAT to commit the Dispensation thereof to frail Men, is a proper Means for the Attainment of that End.

(1.) IT is a Design worthy of GOD to secure to himself the Glory of a powerful successful Gospel. This is no more than what He owes to himself, and He cannot give his Glory to another.

1. THE Glory of all, is due to GOD in the Kingdom of Nature, as He is the Maker and Preserver of all Things, He justly claims the supreme Honour of All; and

and Nothing more reasonable, than that as all Things are of Him, and thro' Him, all Things should be to Him ; H_E that is the First Cause, is, and must be the last End of All. Rom. xi. 36.

G O D could not propose any other ultimate End to Himself in Creating, Preserving and Governing the World, than His own Glory. Should the Honour of the Creature have been His supreme Design, He had placed the Creature in His own Room ; and descended from his essential Dignity to become only a Means to Something further ; and the Means, as such, must be always inferior to the End. The Order of the Universe, consists in the due Subordination of all second Causes, to the first Cause ; and of all lesser Designs, to the great Design of G O D's Glory. Sin is an Usurpation upon these Rights of G O D ; and therefore the Cause of all the Distraction and Confusion that has filled the World.

2. I N the Kingdom of Grace, G O D has yet a further Claim to the Glory of All :

All: For this being a Dispensation of the mere Favour of GOD, not only above, and without any Merit in the Creature, but prevailing over our greatest Demerit, it must needs exclude all Boasting of our own, and terminate in the Glory of GOD our Saviour; *No Flesh must Glory in His Presence.*

Heb. ii.
10.

IN the Kingdom of Grace every Thing is ordered so, as to cut off all Occasion of Glorifying in ourselves, and to secure the Honour of all to GOD. *It became Him of whom are all Things, and to whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons to Glory, to make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through Sufferings.* In the Work of our Salvation, GOD is fitly represented as ONE of whom are all Things, as the principal Cause; and for whom are all Things, as the ultimate End; and as such, He has always considered what became Him to do, and has done every Thing so, as became the Greatest and the Best of BEINGS, who will be glorified by All.

THE whole Course and Conduct of Redeeming Mercy tends this Way; and
if

if any of us are made accepted in the Beloved, it is to the praise of the Glory of His Grace. And Nothing is more Reasonable than that whatever flows from the true Fountain of Divine Grace, should as directly fall into the immense Ocean of His Glory. Eph. i. 6.

AND it is the Interest of Men that it should be so : Where can the efficacious Power of the Gospel be better lodged for them, than in the Hands of GOD Himself, who is every-where present, and infinite in Goodness, to whom they have access at all Times, and in all Places ? This invites and draws the Dependence of the Creature upon GOD, and all our Devotions to Him. We know now to Whom we must offer up Supplications, when we do not experience this Excellency of Power attending the Gospel ; to Whom we must pay our Thank-offering, when it is successful.

(2.) As the Design is worthy of GOD ; so the Way and Means that GOD has chosen are proper to accomplish the Design :

sign: How could this End of God's Glory been better secured, than by committing the *Gospel-Treasure* to *earthen Vessels*.

THE manifest Disparity that there is between the Value of the *Treasure*, and the Meanness of the *Vessel*, the Greatness of the *Work*, and the Weakness of the *Instrument*; make it sufficiently evident, that *the Excellency of the Power is of God, and not of Man*. There needs no more to evince this, than to set it before you in a few Particulars.

I. THAT a frail, dying Man, should be a Means of Conveying spiritual, and eternal Life to such as were *dead in Trespases and Sins*, very plainly tells us where the Power lies; if Man himself were the principal Agent in this great Work, when he dies, his Work would die with him; but since the Work remains, when the Workman dies; it is plain, that renewed Souls are born *not of corruptible Seed, but incorruptible*, even, *the Word and Power of God, that endures for ever*.

1 Pet. i.
23.

THAT

2. THAT a weak, sinful Man, is too often overcome by his own Corruptions, should be the Means of delivering others from the Bondage of Sin, makes it very evident where *the Excellency of the Power* lies. Sometimes GOD has made Use of unconverted Men, for the Conversion of others; and tho' the Preaching of such, is not ordinarily so successful, as that of those who *have believed, and therefore spoken*; yet I doubt not, but GOD has made use of some such to shew that He is a free Agent, and has not any Need either of the Gifts or Graces of his Ministers; but can by Clay and Spittle, open the Eyes of the Blind. And when this is the Case, how plainly does it say to us, *Give God the Glory, for this Man is a Sinner.*

BUT those Ministers that are not destitute of the Grace of GOD, are subject to like Passions with other Men, and greatly sometimes are foiled and captivated by 'em; and yet by their Ministry, others are made wiser, and more humble and holy

E than

than themselves ; and this plainly enough shews where the *Excellency of the Power* lies.

3. THAT some Ministers of mean Gifts, and weak Judgments, and very imperfect Utterance, should be more successful than others of far greater Capacities and Qualifications, is sufficient Evidence where the *Power* lies. And this is not seldom the Case in Fact ; a plain, zealous Preacher, with great Simplicity of Expression, has been often known to bring more Souls to CHRIST, than some great Divines have done, tho' they sincerely desired it, and laid out all their excellent Talents for that Purpose. GOD seems to have ordered it thus, that the

1 Cor. ii. 5. *Faith of His People should not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God.*

4. THAT a poor Minister, that is of a broken and contrite Spirit himself, should be made a Son of Consolation to others, and be much more successful in scattering their Fears and Doubts, than his own ; should be a Helper of the Joy
of

of others, and taste but little of that Comfort and Joy himself; but be ready to bow down under his Burden: This shews where *the Excellency of the Power* lies. Surely, were it in himself, he would first heal the Wounds in his own Spirit, and take the Promises home to himself; but he finds that it is GOD alone that comforts those that are cast down; and if he be any Way helpful to the Consolation of others, it is because the Spirit of GOD is upon him, and has given him an Uction for that very Purpose.

1C. II. 12.

5. *And Lastly,* WHEN the Minister particularly desires and intends the Conversion of some Souls known and dear to him, he should miss his Aim, as to them, and the Arrow of the Gospel should be directed to others, and be effectual to them; this demonstrates that *the Excellency of the Power is of God, and not of us.* I doubt not, but it is lawful for Ministers to intend with a particular Desire, the Salvation of some

more than others; their Relation to them, Acquaintance with them, and Affection for them, may constrain them to it; and they may, and do order their Ministration accordingly; but they often fail of desired Success; and yet the same Word meets with others, whose Case they did not so well understand, or so much lay to Heart, the Word suits their Case as directly, as if the Minister had singled them out; for GOD means them, tho' the Minister meant others; and there is a powerful Spirit accompanying the Word, that breathes where it pleaseth; so that *the Excellency of the Power is of God, and not of us.*

I MAY have Leave to allude here to the Case of *Samuel*, when he was sent to *Jesse's* House to anoint one of his Sons King over *Israel*; he was pleased with the Countenance and Stature of *Eliab*, and hoped, and wished He might be the Person; but he is passed by, and after him *Abinadab*, and all the other, till *David* came; One so little thought of, that he was left with the Flock

in the Field ; but he must be sent for ; and
and when he appear'd, then the Spirit said,
Arise, anoint him, this is He. In this free,
surprizing, sovereign Way and Manner <sup>1 Sam.
xvi. 12.</sup>
does the Grace of GOD frequently act
in the Conversion of Souls. The Mini-
ster's particular Intentions and Expecta-
tions are set aside ; and till the chosen
Person, and the chosen Time is come,
the holy Oyl never flowes out ; but then
the Spirit gives the effectual Call, *Arise,*
anoint him, this is He.

THUS we have considered both the
Value of the Gospel, the Way by which
it is conveyed to Men, and the Reason
why GOD has chosen to commit so
great a *Treasure* to *earthen Vessels*.

AND now let me offer some Things
to you for the Improvement of this
Subject.

I. HAVE you this *Treasure* in *earthen*
Vessels? Think not the worse of the
Treasure because of the Meanness of the
Vessels ; despise not your Ministers be-
cause they are weak and frail Men, like
yourselves,

yourselfes, look at the Commission which G O D has given them, and the Authority with which He hath cloathed them: The Pride of Man hath been apt to rise against this, and could not be content to be taught by one of his Fellow-Creatures. The *Israelites* murmured against *Moses* and *Aaron*, and thought they took too much upon them, and affected too great a Distinction from the Rest of the People, Ungrateful Men! they had forgotten the Time when they stood Trembling before the Mount of G O D, and said, *Let Moses speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.*

2. THINK somewhat the better of the *Vessel* for the Sake of the *Treasure*; there is a particular Respect due to Ministers for their Work Sake, let their bodily Presence be never so weak, or their Speech contemptible; yet the Message they bring, is weighty and

2 Cor. x.
10.

powerful.
It is true, the best of them are
but

but Ministers by whom ye believe ; even as the LORD gave to every Man. But that's not Nothing. As this Consideration should keep them from Pride ; so it should also screen them from Contempt. Let their Lives be precious in your Sight ; do not look upon them as a Sort of Men that the World can very well spare , be duely affected with their Deaths, and let their Memories be honoured by you, when they are gone, according to the Measure of their Fidelity and Usefulness here.

3. ABOVE all Things, see to it, that your Souls be enriched with this *Treasure* before all the *Vessels* be broken ; and they break so fast of late, that it is high Time for us all to awake out of sleep, and to set about a more diligent Improvement of the Means and Helps that are yet left with us. Let us all consider how sad our State will be, if while we have enjoyed such rich Means of Grace, our Souls should still remain wretched and miserable, and poor and blind,

blind, and naked: Let us take Heed, lest that should come upon us which is written *Jer. vi. 29. The Bellows are burnt, the Lead is consumed in the Fire, the Founder melteth in vain. Reprobate Silver shall Men call them; for the LORD hath rejected them.*

If it shall appear to us, That the Spirit of the LORD is withdrawn, and His Grace with-held; that there is not that excellent *Power* attending the Ministry, as sometimes there has been, let us all Cry earnestly to Him, of Whom this Power is, the God of *Elijah*, That He would return unto us, and revive His Work in the Midst of Us.

4. BE thankfull that the *Treasure* is not lost, when the *Vessels* are broken, that the Word lives, and the Work lives when Ministers die; lay up the immortal Word in your Hearts, let it live there, and take all proper and prudent Methods for the continued Ministration of the Gospel among you, and then you will find you have the same *Treasure* tho' the

the *Vessels* are changed, and that in the diversity of Gifts there is the same God, which worketh all, and in all.

5. And Lastly, WAIT and prepare for that World where GOD will no longer communicate Himself to you by *earthen Vessels*, but will lead you up to the Spring-head, the Fountain of living Waters, and give you the full and immediate Enjoyment of Himself.

HIS present Method of Conveyance to you is very wise and kind, and well suited to your imperfect State, but this is not the best that GOD is able or willing to do for you, here the Fulness of the Fountain is somewhat limited by the Straitness of the *Vessels*; the richest and most enlarged Minds can contain but a small Portion of the Knowledge of GOD, we see here but part of his Ways. And that which is conveyed to you has too often a Mixture of our own cleaving to it, and favours too much of the *earthen Vessel*; and as the best Ministers cannot convey all to you, that may be known and en-

joyed of GOD, so you are not obliged implicitly to receive all that they dispense to you: Nay, you are obliged, like *the noble Bereans*, to search the Scriptures, whether the Things that are preached to you are so.

THESE are the Defects of the Dispensation you are now under; but in the other World your Souls shall be enlarged to the utmost, and perfectly refin'd from all Error and Impurity, and then shall the divine Light, Life, and Love be communicated to you in all Perfection.

THE blessed Hope of such a State approaching will be our best Support under all the Losses that we meet with here, whether in our own Houses, or in the House of GOD; Death to those that are found in CHRIST, is the Passage from a State of Childhood, to Maturity; here we understand as Children, think as Children, and speak as Children, there we shall have put away childish Things, and shall for ever admire and adore the Wisdom and Goodness of GOD, that by the present imperfect Way of ministerial Institution

tution and Education, has gradually formed and fitted us for that strong and clear Light in which GOD Himself dwells, and which is inaccessible to Man in this frail and mortal State.

THE Lord grant, That not only the Lives and Labours of his Ministers, but even their Silence and their Death too, may be an effectual Means to prepare us for that World, and to quicken our Pursuits and Endeavours after it, *Amen,*



F I N I S.



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The following TRACTS and SERMONS were
Published by the Rev^d Mr. FREKE.



FAST-SERMON, on Occasion of
the great Storm. 4th. 1703.

2. A Sermon Preach'd to the Societies for
Reformation of Manners, in the Cities of
London and Westminster, Octob. 2, 1704.

3. A Funeral Sermon on the Death of the
Reverend Mr. Quirk. 4th. 1706.

4. Union the Strength of a People. Con-
sidered in a Sermon Preach'd in Bartholomew-
Close, May 1, 1707. Being the Day of
Thanksgiving, &c. 8^o.

5. A Practical Discourse concerning a
Tender Conscience, as delivered in the Holy
Scriptures, &c. 8^o. 1708.

6. The Heroick Christian. A Sermon on
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Close, Jan, 31, 1714. 8^o.

7. An Essay upon the Liberty of the Will,
and Humane Actions. 8^o. 1715.

8. The Nature, Guilt, and Danger of
Rebelling against the Light, explain'd and
improv'd. With a Prefatory Epistle to the
Rising Generation. 8^o. 1716.

9. CHRIST the Saviour of his People.
A Sermon Preach'd at Hackney, on the Wed-
nesday-Lecture, Aug. 1, 1716. 8^o.

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